

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project

Adaptive Management Oversight Committee

Standard Operating Procedure

Title: Temporary Closures

Number: 7.0

File Name: MW SOP 07.Temporary Closures.Final.20050430.doc

Purpose: This SOP describes the process for coordinating and facilitating temporary closures of public lands in association with wolf management activities. It supersedes relevant sections of the 1998 Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan (USFWS 1998), and therefore represents, in part, the “Service Approved Management Plan” referenced in the Mexican Wolf Final Rule (50 CFR 17.84(k)).

Exceptions: None. Per SOP 2.0, AMOC must approve any exceptions to this SOP, with concurrence from the Director of the state wildlife Lead Agency responsible for recommending the proposed closure.

Background: Temporary closures are sometimes needed for wolf releases to buffer or protect wolves that are denning or which have pups in rendezvous sites, wolves temporarily restrained in pens, or wolves using a pen area immediately post-release. Whenever possible, such closures should allow travel on trails and roads. If a wolf pack might have pups, a closure to prohibit dogs along open trails may also be recommended to prevent conflicts with adult wolves protecting pups. Temporary closures are limited to a radius of one-mile around the release pen, den site, or rendezvous site. In any case, closures should be proposed for as small an area as possible and for as brief a period as possible, and structured to address the specific circumstances for each site/area.

Each temporary closure requires substantial coordination among, and input from, all parties involved in the Reintroduction Project, including AMOC, the IFT, AMWG Cooperators, other stakeholders, and the public.

Procedures:

1. If a proposed wolf release on U.S.D.A. Forest Service (USFS) lands includes a temporary closure, or the IFT wants to use a closure to protect an occupied den site or rendezvous site:
 - a. The IFT shall contact the USFS District Ranger and law enforcement agent responsible for the area to discuss the closure and the timeframe in which a decision is needed, and assistance with enactment and enforcement of the closure.
 - b. Immediately upon Lead Agency approval of a wolf release including a proposed pen, den-site, or rendezvous-site closure, the IFT shall request that the Forest Service enact and begin enforcing the closure on the appropriate date.
 - c. Not more than 72 hours before the date on which the closure takes effect, and not more than 72 hours after that date, the IFT, USFS, and/or any cooperators shall post easily visible closure notices or signs: at local USFS District Ranger Stations; at nearby

- trailheads; in information centers; along trails, roads, or ridges that allow access into the closed area; and in other areas as appropriate.
- d. Each closure notice or sign must clearly indicate what activities are allowed or prohibited, including but not limited to travel on trails and roads, travel off trails or roads, overnight camping, and/or dogs along open trails.
 - e. Each closure notice location must be recorded on a standard form to help ensure that all signs and notices can be located and removed when the closure is lifted.
2. Closures should remain in effect while wolves are in the pen or using the immediate area of the pen, den site, or rendezvous site.
 3. Within 24 hours after the IFT has determined the wolves are no longer using the protected area, the IFT Leader for the appropriate jurisdiction shall request that the USFS rescind the closure.
 4. Within 72 hours of the USFS lifting the closure, the IFT Leader for the appropriate jurisdiction shall:
 - a. Ensure that all closure notices and signs are removed.
 - b. Notify the local permittees, local county officials, and local USFS District Rangers that the closure has been lifted.
 - c. Collaborate with the Lead Agencies in issuing a general news release, with copies to the county government of the county in which the closure occurred, announcing the closure has been lifted.

Approvals:

The Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Adaptive Management Oversight Committee approved this SOP on November 18, 2004.

References:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998. 1998 Mexican Wolf Interagency Management Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico.